



REMEMBERING
Betty Klassen

April 2, 1925 - September 26, 2020



Mom died in her sleep at the Abbotsford Regional Hospital on September 26th, 2020 at the age of 95.

Born Elizabeth Enns to Cornelius and Elizabeth Enns (nee Kornelson) in the Molotschna Mennonite Colony of South Russia, in the area we know today as the Ukraine. She was predeceased by her son Gerald, husband Herman and daughter Joyce.

She is survived by her children:

son-in-law John Klassen

daughter Linda (Patrick) Brown

daughter Marilyn (Ron) Isaak

son David Klassen (Debbie)

14 grandchildren

29 great grandchildren, 3 step-grandchildren, 1 surrogate grandchild

2 great-great grandchildren

In the fall of 1925, when Betty was about 6 months old, Grandpa and Grandma Enns took what they could and following a long and no doubt dangerous trip, made their way across Europe to Liverpool, England. They boarded the SS Montrose heading for Canada on November 21st, 1925 and arrived on November 29th, 1925 in St John's, New Brunswick. From there they travelled across Canada to Lethbridge Alberta, settling in Coledale for a time, where they joined the Mennonite community that had settled there in earlier years. After a few years there they moved to the Fraser Valley, then a year in Black Creek, Vancouver Island, and eventually settled on a 20 acre parcel on Clearbrook Road, now part of the Abbotsford Airport.

Like many young Mennonite girls at the time, Betty had little formal education. In the summers she picked strawberries and raspberries, and, in the fall, she picked hops with her friends in Sumas Prairie. As a teen-ager she joined other girlfriends in working at a fish-canning factory in New Westminster.

Central to life in those early years was church community life at the South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church where Betty made many friends. Just a week before she died, she had a good visit at Tabor Court with her friend Anne Nickel, a friend she had had for over 80 years!

"I met Herman," Betty recalled, "picking strawberries in Mission." He soon joined the South Abbotsford youth group and the friendship grew. Betty and Herman were married on August 10th, 1945, when Betty was 20 years old. A year later, in August of 1946, they bought a 67 acre treed property on 264th Street in Aldergrove. It was Herman's dream to turn this bush into a successful dairy farm and he eventually would. Betty said of their creaky new home: "We had lights but no fancy faucets, just a pump from which we drew cold water." She told a friend: "We didn't have any money, but we had strong backs, ambition and trust in God. God never let us down even in those first years when we were struggling to make ends meet. Herman and I cleared the land with a team of horses," she recalled, "we didn't get a tractor until sometime in the 1950s. We sold Christmas trees for 15 cents apiece. Herman worked for a carpenter for 80 cents an hour. We thought it was great!"

With the move to Aldergrove they joined the newly founded East Aldergrove Mennonite Brethren Church on Ross Road where they served for many years and made many lifelong friends.

Their first child Joyce arrived on December 23rd, 1946, followed by Gerald (Jerry) on September 17, 1948, then Linda on March 6th, 1953, Marilyn on April 21, 1957 and David on October 5, 1959. With a growing family, Herman built a new home after their third child was born; "We had running water and we even had our own telephone."

In July of 1958, their son Jerry, almost ten years old at the time, was injured in a vehicle accident and died later that day. That was a very sad time for Betty and Herman but their faith in God and love for each other got them through.

In the mid-1970s Betty and Herman made a switch from the demanding daily routine of milking cows to raising heifers, giving more time to travel, visiting children and grandchildren who by now were living as far away as England.

In April of 1988 Herman was diagnosed with cancer and died just a short three weeks later, at age 65. His passing was a deep loss for Betty and all of the family. She was 63 and they had been married 43 years.

Three years later Betty moved into a suite at her daughter Marilyn's new home in Abbotsford, where she joined in with their family life for the following eleven years. These were the years that she enjoyed baking for Marilyn's family, spending time with her Dorcas Ladies group at Ross Road Community Church, volunteering at the MCC Thrift Store, as well as serving as a cashier at the lunch café of the Golden Age Society.

In November of 2002, at 77 years old, Betty moved to a ground floor unit at Green

Gables, an apartment condominium on Old Yale Road where her sister Neta was living and her sister Helen would eventually join them. She found a good community of friends there that would meet in the evenings to play tile rummy and some days gather to have lunch together. As osteoporosis and loss of hearing took its toll on her, she chose to stay home more. She joined the Clearbrook MB Church and loved the virtual connection she had through their television ministry.

In April 2015, at 90 years old, Betty moved into Assisted Living at Tabor Court.

All who knew Betty loved her; many experienced the way in which she gave her full attention to whomever she was with. She loved people and was wonderfully curious and supportive of others, especially her many children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. To keep in touch with all of them she learned how to use an iPad at age 88, so that she could follow their comings and goings through Instagram and Facebook.

In February of 2020, just 7 months ago, Betty's oldest daughter Joyce succumbed to cancer. Betty's own words at Joyce's graveside reveal the tender heart we all knew her to have: "You look so beautiful, Joyce! I am happy that you are in heaven now and not suffering. Give Dad and Jerry a hug for me and tell them that I love them. I will come see you soon. I love you."

A special thank you from the family to the care staff at Tabor Court and to Dr. Clifford Moodley who served her so well.

